CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND FORTY-SECOND PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 17 February 2000, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Ismat Jahan (Bangladesh)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 842nd plenary meeting of the Conference.

As the delegation of Bangladesh assumes the presidency of the Conference, it is a distinct honour and privilege for me to represent Ambassador Iftekhar Chowdhury here today. Ambassador Chowdhury, who is currently in Bangkok in connection with the UNCTAD conference, regrets very much not being able to be present here today. Nonetheless, he has asked me to convey his warm greetings to you all. I would have rather liked to pause here and wait for Ambassador Chowdhury to return and make the opening remarks of the presidency as he joins us in the plenary next week. But I would be remiss if I did not express our deep gratitude to Ambassador Harald Kreid of Austria for his untiring efforts and the valuable contribution that he and his delegation have made during his presidency. My delegation is also grateful to Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the Secretary-General of the Conference, and Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, the Deputy Secretary-General, and all other members of the secretariat for their valuable support and indispensable counsel.

It is no secret that we continue to find ourselves in a situation of delicate deadlock. While we were successful in adopting the agenda of the Conference right at the beginning, we are yet to reach a consensus on the programme of work. In resolving the ongoing impasse, there is a need for renewed commitment and, more importantly, political will on the part of all CD members, especially those with notably strong national positions. We earnestly hope that the desired commitment and political will will be forthcoming, and that a spirit of cooperation and accommodation will soon come to prevail in this Conference. The Bangladesh delegation, during its presidency, will spare no effort to move the process forward. To this end, we would count on the cooperation, support and above all, the understanding of all members.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representative of the United States of America. I give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, Ambassador Robert T. Grey.

Mr. GREY (United States of America): Madam President, as your country begins its service in the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament (CD), let me assure you of my delegation's full support in the difficult job you have undertaken. As your predecessor just over a year ago, I faced many of the same challenges that still confront you. It is undoubtedly a great frustration for both of us that the CD remains deadlocked in its efforts to agree on any elements to include in our work programme.

Some of the previous speakers during this session have claimed that the state of multilateral disarmament in the world at large does not give cause for optimism. In our view, this is too negative an appraisal. Even if one were to accept that the international community is not making as much progress as we would like, we in the CD need to remember that the picture outside our halls is not entirely bleak. The full record includes many practical achievements, and the international community continues to consolidate them today.

(Mr. Grey, United States)

The United States and Russia, for example, are ahead of schedule in making START I reductions, and our two countries have agreed to seek even lower levels of deployed warheads in START III. The United States continues to dismantle nuclear warheads; we have dismantled 7,000 since 1993 and 13,000 over the last decade. The United States has unilaterally removed hundreds of tons of fissile material from military stockpiles and has voluntarily pledged to make this material available for IAEA safeguards as soon as practical. We continue to work with Russia and others to ensure that nuclear materials are safe and secure, to enhance transparency, and to transform excess weapons plutonium irreversibly into forms that cannot be used in nuclear weapons.

In the non-nuclear field, the global regime established by the Chemical Weapons Convention continues to be strengthened. A wide range of countries have intensified their cooperation aimed at discouraging missile tests and the export of destabilizing missiles and related technologies. The United Nations is negotiating a global proposal to combat the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in small arms, which often pose a danger to regional stability. On the Korean peninsula, efforts to reduce tensions continue under a broad initiative developed by former Secretary of Defence William Perry. The United States and other countries are actively seeking to promote strategic restraint in South Asia, and there have been hopeful developments in negotiations to secure a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Undoubtedly, the United States Senate's failure last October to agree to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was a setback. However, President Clinton made it abundantly clear that the fight is not over. He is convinced that, in the end, the United States will ratify the CTBT, and the Administration has already taken steps to secure this outcome. A CTBT task force has been established, and the President has appointed General John M. Shalikashvili as a special adviser to reach out to members of the Senate, seek to bridge differences, and encourage the Senate ultimately to give its advice and consent to ratification.

Here in the CD, my country's first priority remains the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). This goal was identified in the "Principles and objectives" document of the 1995 NPT Review Conference as the next practical step in multilateral efforts leading toward nuclear disarmament. One speaker, however, whose country subscribed to the NPT "Principles and objectives" document, has now stated that his country will not permit the CD to negotiate on FMCT unless there are parallel negotiations on nuclear arms reductions and outer space.

But there is a broad understanding in this body that these two topics are not ripe for treaty negotiations in the CD at this time. The United States for its part is prepared to discuss, in a suitable context, outer space issues and questions related to the long-term goal of nuclear disarmament; but proposals for CD negotiations now in these fields are clearly not a basis for consensus.

It would be even more problematical to go in the other direction and downgrade CD work on FMCT from negotiation to discussion. A negotiation on FMCT is not new to the Conference on Disarmament. In 1995 and 1998 the Conference established ad hoc committees with just that

(Mr. Grey, United States)

task. To do anything less now would be a step backward. If we cannot move forward on the basis of a solid international consensus formally endorsed by the member States of the CD, all the parties to the NPT, and at the United Nations General Assembly, then no agreement is safe. Succumbing to the temptation to reopen previously agreed issues will only slow the disarmament process even further and increase the obstacles to the achievement of our shared goals.

My delegation is very concerned that we are headed in the wrong direction again this year. We began this session with an implicit understanding that two main issues remained to be resolved before we could agree on elements of a work programme and get down to business. Yet so far we seem to be increasing, rather than decreasing, our areas of disagreement.

What happens next is up to us. The CD will have no trouble maintaining its role as the world's single multilateral negotiating body if we do what is expected of us: negotiate multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements that contribute to the security and well-being of mankind. We need to focus on what is possible now, not seek perfect, all-encompassing solutions to disarmament. We also need to resist the urge to score political debating points or involve the CD in issues it cannot address effectively. If we can do this, members of the CD will have no trouble keeping it relevant and engaged. If not, those who seek progress on disarmament will look elsewhere.

In my remarks today, I have focused primarily on FMCT negotiations as a first priority for the CD. The United States continues to seek a CD role in negotiating a comprehensive ban on transfers of anti-personnel mines. We realize that the CD has never taken a formal decision to negotiate on APLs but it has on FMCT. We are deeply concerned that one or two countries are now calling this consensus on FMCT into question.

On another issue, I am obliged to comment on the remarks made recently in this hall by the distinguished representative of China. Aside from the erroneous impressions they created, these remarks involved the kind of name-calling on issues extraneous to the CD that complicates our mutual efforts to get practical work done.

It was implied that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was little more than a tool of the United States, available on demand for enforcing hegemonism, intervening in countries' internal affairs, and practising the unauthorized use of force.

As for seeking hegemony, the record speaks for itself. Americans are not interested in that sort of thing. One of our founding fathers and early Presidents, John Quincy Adams, got it right when he wrote this about the United States of America and her policy:

> "Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions, and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own."

(Mr. Grey, United States)

That having been said, vindicating our national freedom and independence in today's world means accepting responsibilities far different from those we were willing to accept in Adams' time. The United States is now a main actor on the world stage - not the main actor, but a main actor.

This is an important and crucial distinction, for, as a distinguished historian, Eugene Rostow, who was my old boss at the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, pointed out:

> "[Though] American pride resists it, the United States is not strong enough, and cannot make itself strong enough, to protect its security interests in world politics with its own efforts alone. Our dependence on alliances and coalitions will necessarily continue in the years ahead... ."

The point is clear: America looks for peace and security in partnership with like-minded nations. We do not seek domination, we seek balance. Just as we govern ourselves with a series of checks and balances, we embrace the same idea in international affairs. In short, we do not seek hegemony. We do not have the temperament or the inclination for it, nor do we have the means.

In addition, the assertion that our NATO allies are manipulated with impunity by the United States simply is not true. Defensive, democratic alliances do not work that way, either in Europe or elsewhere. Democratic alliances reach agreement collectively after much give and take. Massachusetts people like me learn very early in life that people who live north of us in Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, and our Canadian cousins as well, are just like us. They do not take orders from anyone. Neither do democratic allies like the Norwegians, the Dutch or the Australians, to name but a few. If there are any doubts on that score, just check with any NATO member who ever negotiated a NATO communiqué together with our French allies.

Far from exacerbating international tensions, the United States and its alliance partners in Europe and elsewhere have worked very hard to reduce them. In addition, since the end of the cold war, NATO has radically reduced its reliance on nuclear forces. The number of nuclear weapons for sub-strategic forces in Europe has gone down by over 85 per cent. The readiness posture of alert forces is now measured in weeks rather than minutes, and in 1996 NATO ministers announced that NATO has "no intention, no plan, and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new member countries". All the allies are parties to the NPT, and all NATO members are committed to early entry into force of the CTBT.

The distinguished representative of China also implied that the United States practised a double standard toward arms control agreements and was attempting to weaken or abolish the ABM Treaty. I reject this assertion. There has already been substantial public discussion of this issue, so the facts should be clear by now. The international environment has changed